

Interagency Human Trafficking Task Force
Data Collection and Information Sharing Subcommittee Meeting
February 11, 2013
Convened at 10:00 am

Members present: Amy Farrell (co-chair), Chief Tom Pasquarello (co-chair), Lori Ann Bertram
Members absent: Susan Goldfarb, David Carabin; Chris Carroll; Mike Coelho
Massachusetts Attorneys General Staff Present: Britte McBride, Kim Henry
Guests: Brandy Donini_Melanson (US Attorney Office), Michael Gilmore (FBI), Cynthia Deitle (FBI) Jason Mount (ICE), Erol Flynn (ICE), Stacy Fleishman (ICE)

The goal of today's meeting was to discuss the charge of the subcommittee with federal partners working on human trafficking investigations and identify areas of potential collaboration and areas of challenges in information sharing.

The federal partners opened up with a discussion of some of the challenges they face with information sharing. In human trafficking cases it is difficult to understand and map the criminal enterprise or network. Human trafficking operations both domestic and foreign commonly involve multiple players in multiple locations that help facilitate the criminal activity. Connecting the dots between potential suspects and between suspects and different groups of victims is hard. Even if the victim is willing to provide information these connections are hard to make. They try to link people through phone records, Facebook posts, other social media. But even when they understand that people are connected, it is not clear if people are associates, friends or partners in criminal enterprises. Not clear that people are actually part of the criminal conspiracy.

For the FBI, the majority of their human trafficking work involves US citizen suspects and victims, mainly sex trafficking. For ICE, the majority of their work involves non-citizens, both sex trafficking and labor trafficking. ICE they utilizes systems to identify international travel (program that tracks ticket purchases).

The federal partners agreed that there were better examples of partnerships and information sharing to help connect the dots. HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) task forces for example have been able to develop better systems to share information within the local task forces between local law enforcement and federal investigative partners and across task forces. They see a need for this in human trafficking because they know that suspects (and sometimes victims) come into contact with local law enforcement but the signs of human trafficking are missed.

The federally-funded Boston human trafficking task force was missing the information sharing piece. Task force partners would work together on individual cases but they were reluctant to share information on cases that they were building or intelligence about what was happening in the community more generally. The US Attorney's Office has taken more of a leadership role recently to facilitate information sharing. They host a quarterly closed law enforcement meeting with BPD, District Attorney's offices from around the state, AG, FBI, and ICE. Each partner brings information about the cases that they are developing or what they are seeing in their local community. It is a relatively small group that hopefully will become more comfortable sharing

information. They have run into some challenges with people being unwilling to disclose information about cases that are being developed or intelligence in their community.

The DAs are tasked with gathering information from local law enforcement in their region about human trafficking issues, suspects or specific cases that are being developed. The process makes the DAs responsible for keeping a “pulse” on what is going on in their community and sharing that information with federal partners. There is no standardized way that the DAs are currently collecting data from the local law enforcement. The information “floats up to the DAs in a variety of ways.” The next step is to ensure that the DAs offices receive information systematically from all their local law enforcement agencies. The DAs provide some consistency in representing various local agencies. It is important to keep the same players at the table so people build trust, but they tend to know a very small amount about what the local partners are actually working on when investigations/cases have not yet reached a stage of being developed for prosecution and information has been shared with a prosecutor.

This informal information sharing process is critical because they found that often they are working on overlapping investigations; sometimes at cross purposes. If two counties or a local and a federal agency are both looking at the same suspect they need to coordinate their efforts and share what they know about the criminal operation. The federal partners want to avoid/prevent local law enforcement from doing the “quick hit” and arresting a suspect for a minor violation when the federal partners are conducting a long-term investigation into a criminal conspiracy. Currently they don’t have too many human trafficking cases so the process can remain informal. People can keep information about the different cases “in their head.” Once they get more cases, the information sharing needs to be more systematic. Since there is no shared database or system of collecting information that is shared at the quarterly meeting it is not possible to conduct analysis on the information shared in the meetings, can’t look at trends. They want to have intelligence-driven practices but the intelligence either sits in a single agency or is only shared informally between agencies.

The quarterly information sharing meetings were born out of the fact that each partners information sharing/data collection/case management systems cannot share information with partners outside their system (without specific clearance, permissions, etc.).

The group has talked about how they might develop a systematic information sharing system for human trafficking.

Challenges of information sharing system:

- Individual agency concerns about who has the ability to enter information, view information or edit information.
- Concerns about how much and what type of information would be shared.
- Data security concerns - necessity that system meet National Crime Information Service Standards. Every terminal that has access to the data has to meet some security standards to access the information. Standards about records schedule for pursuing and accessing information.
- Discovery concerns – whenever you have a system that federal partners enter information into jointly with local partners you open up the possibility of discovery motions that

could access information in that system. Boston has largest discovery requests in the nation so some concern about federal partners sharing access to records systems with Boston.

- Contacting – host of companies that build databases with federal information. Necessity of vendor to have experience in this area.
- Agreement that information sharing an endemic problem with local and federal partnerships and among local agencies. Suspects are much better at sharing information than are law enforcement.
- ***Biggest challenge: Federal partners want the ability to access information that is collected by local law enforcement, but they cannot provide information into that shared system about their investigations/intelligence. Real concerns from federal partners about sharing information in their own systems. For example, FBI civil rights division investigates police officers/agencies misconduct. They would not want to open up their system of information in any way that might jeopardize ongoing investigations about ht or about other crimes. They are fearful of sharing information about their investigations with a wide audience out of a concern that information may be inappropriately passed along to suspects.***

Possibilities for information sharing:

- The best models appear to be using the Fusion Center as a place to warehouse information from state, local and federal partners.
 - Need to bring in the legal counsel of FBI, HSI/ICE, AG, local law enforcement to see how you might be able to work around the challenge of federal and local information sharing.
- Would like a system with a look-up function where you could see the points of contact that have entered information or have intelligence about a particular suspect or victim. That would both facilitate the sharing of information and open possibilities for collaboration on investigations that were previously untapped.\
- A system that could go into individual agency case management systems, maybe searching narratives for names would be ideal. Entering data into own case management system and separate shared ht information sharing system would be cumbersome and ineffective.
- Necessity of protocol to guide information sharing. Example of Polaris tips. Right now they go to a wide group of people and it is not clear who is responding (this is better than previous system where they went to a limited number of people who might not be the right points of contact). A call-tree, decision-tress model is needed both for Polaris tips and also for any system of information-sharing built in Massachusetts.